

COPY OF REPORT

TO THE

BOARD OF TRADE

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL HUTCHINSON, R.E., C.B.

OF HIS

INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT

OF THE

TRALEE AND DINGLE LIGHT RAILWAY.

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*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.*

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## TRALEE AND DINGLE LIGHT RAILWAY.

Board of Trade, (Railway Department.)

17 April 1893.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Board of Trade, in compliance with the instructions contained in your Minute of the 13th ultimo, the result of my enquiry into the management of the Tralee and Dingle Light Railway.

This enquiry, which took place in the Court House, Tralee, on the 22nd ultimo, was held under the 46th section of the Order in Council dated September 17, 1888, consequent upon a memorial from a large number (about 113) of the ratepayers of the barony of Corkaquiny (one of the baronies liable to make payments on account of the baronial guarantee given in respect of the railway), asking for an enquiry into the whole concern of the Tralee and Dingle Light Railway, the constitution of the directorate, the salaries of the officials, and the general management of the line.

The memorialists were represented by Mr. Downing, solicitor;

The township of Tralee and barony of Claremorris by Mr. Horgan, solicitor; and

The Tralee and Dingle Light Railway Company by Mr. Huggart, solicitor.

Mr. Huggart raised an objection to the enquiry being ordered under the 46th section of the Order in Council on the ground that there was nothing in the memorial relating to such default in the completion, working, or maintaining of the line as to bring the enquiry within the scope of section 46; but he at the same time announced that the Company wished that every ratepayer should have the fullest opportunity of making any statement he desired with reference to the management of the line.

Mr. Downing then called witnesses in support of the various statements in the memorial, viz:—

1. Father T. O'Sullivan, parish priest of Anniscuil.
2. Mr. Michael O'Leary.
3. Mr. Thomas O'Donoghue, merchant, Dingle.
4. Mr. W. A. Ireland, fish dealer, Dingle.
5. Mr. Thomas Long, fish dealer, Dingle.
6. Mr. Patrick Long, trawl fish trader, Dingle.
7. Mr. Flaherty, farmer, near Dingle.
8. Mr. James Long, fish dealer, Dingle.
9. Mr. Justin McCarthy, farmer, near Anniscuil.
10. Mr. M. Slattery, auctioneer, Tralee, and corporate director of railway from September 1890 to September 1891.
11. Mr. James Herlihy, shopkeeper, Anniscuil.

Mr. Horgan next made a short speech and examined two witnesses, viz:—

12. Mr. M. Dissette, wine merchant, Tralee.
13. Mr. Burke, fish dealer, Dingle.

Mr. Huggart then opened the case on behalf of the Railway Company, and called as witnesses—

14. Colonel Rowan, chairman of the Railway Company.
15. Mr. Parkes, manager of the railway, and station-master at Tralee.
16. Mr. Stewart, secretary to the Clogher Valley Tramway Company.
17. Mr. Hickson, engineer to the railway.

The proceedings then terminated.

Before considering the bearing of the evidence upon the matters raised in the memorial, it may be useful to mention the following particulars with regard to the railway which was opened for traffic in March 1891.

It consists of a main line between Tralee and Dingle and a branch, leaving the main line at a point about 10 miles from Tralee, to Castle Gregory.

The main line is about 31 miles 52 chains long, of which about 27 miles 61 chains are laid along the public road, and the remainder through fields; the branch is about 6 miles 11 chains long, of which about 4 miles 27 chains long are laid along the

public road and the remainder through fields. The gauge is 3 ft. and the engines are limited to a weight not exceeding eight tons on an axle. The gradients on the main line are steep, there being a considerable length of 1 in 30, sharp curves occurring on some of these steep gradients. These steep gradients and sharp curves, in conjunction with the limited weight on the wheels of the engines, tend to make the haulage on the line difficult and expensive.

The first of the three subjects alluded to in the memorial as a subject for enquiry is the constitution of the directorate. The directors are now nine in number, six ordinary directors and (as provided for in the Order in Council) three baronial directors, one from each of the three guaranteeing baronies. There was also for a time a director representing the Tralee Town Commissioners, in consideration of the Urban Sanitary Authority of Tralee having guaranteed the interest of 4 per cent. on a sum of 6,000*l.*; but this directorship is at present vacant. None of these directors require any qualification in the way of holding shares.

Complaints were made by Father O'Sullivan and Mr. O'Donoghue that the barony of Corkaguiny, which guarantees the interest of 60,000*l.*, i.e. half the guaranteed capital, is not sufficiently represented by one director, and that the director should be elected by the ratepayers. Father O'Sullivan alleged that the baronial director for the barony of Corkaguiny was also baronial constable, and as such received a commission of 5 per cent. on the rates which have to be levied to meet any deficiency in the working expenses and the guaranteed interest, implying that his personal interest lay in the failure rather than in the success of the line.

Colonel Rowan, chairman of the directors, stated that he considered there were too many directors.

The salary of the chairman is fixed at 52*l.* 10*s.* per annum, and that of each of the directors at a sum not exceeding 20*l.* per annum, so that, if the Tralee Town Commissioners were represented on the Board, there might be an annual charge of 232*l.* 10*s.* for directors' fees, supposing each director was constant in attendance. During the half year ending November 30th last, the director's fees amounted to 76*l.* 13*s.*

As regards then the constitution of the directorate, it would seem desirable to reduce the number of the ordinary directors and thus effect some reduction in the sum payable for directors' fees. The baronial directors are elected in accordance with the terms of the Order in Council, and no change could be made as regards them without an amendment of the order. It certainly would seem just that the barony of Corkaguiny, which guarantees the interest on 60,000*l.*, as against that on 39,000*l.* for the barony of Trillicknashy, and that on 15,000*l.* for the barony of Glannascree, should be represented by at least one additional director; and it also seems inexpedient that the appointment of baronial director should be conferred upon a gentleman already holding a post the emoluments of which are increased in accordance with the amount of taxation necessary to pay the interest on the baronial guarantee, and the loss incurred in the working of the railway; but unless I am misinformed the baronial directors are elected by the ratepayers, some of whom are therefore in this instance complaining of the consequences of their own act.

The second subject raised in the memorial is the salaries of the officials, this referring especially to those of the secretary and the manager.

The salary of the secretary is fixed by the Order in Council at a sum not exceeding 200*l.* per annum, subject to revision by the grand jury.

The salary of the manager, who acts also as station-master at Tralee, is at present fixed at 150*l.* per annum.

No objection was raised to the individual amount of these salaries, but Mr. Slattery (formerly a director) suggested that the office of secretary and manager might with advantage be combined and a saving of expense thus effected. Colonel Rowan was of opinion that this could not be done unless an extra clerk was appointed.

Mr. Stewart, the secretary and manager of the Clogher Valley Tramway, a line of about equal mileage with the Tralee and Dingle Railway, did not think economy would be effected by combining the offices, his salary being 400*l.* a year, there being also an accountant with a salary of 150*l.* a year, and two clerks at 75*l.* a year each.

No reference was made to the salaries of other officials.

Upon this subject it appears to me that the offices of secretary and manager might with advantage be held by one person at some increase over the present salary of either of these officials, making it (say) 250*l.* per annum, an additional clerk at a salary of (say) 50*l.* a year being appointed; a saving of at least 50*l.* a year being thus effected.

The last and most important point raised in the Memorial relates to the general management of the line, and with regard to this the complaints were numerous, the principal ones being the following :—

1. That the secretary being a member of a firm of merchants doing business both in Tralee and Dingle, and his father being also a director of the railway, there is a tendency to favour this firm in the subject of rates, and to benefit Tralee at the expense of Dingle.
2. That the trains are unpunctual.
3. That the trains are not now arranged to run at the most convenient times.
4. That the working expenses are very large, thus causing heavy charges on the tax payers.
5. That free passes on the line are improperly given.
6. That no facilities are afforded at the quay at Dingle for loading trawl fish into waggons, such fish having to be carted from the quay to the passenger station.
7. That the rate for trawl fish from Dingle to Dublin is too high, and is the same now as it was by carts before the railway was opened.
8. That the rate for coarse fish is prohibitory.
9. That special trains are not provided for fairs.
10. That the rates for goods between Tralee and Anniscani, and other places, are now too high.
11. That the fences are imperfect and allow cattle to stray on to the line.
12. That notice is not given of the running of special trains.

With regard to these complaints :—

1. That as to the position of the secretary was supported by Messrs. O'Donoghue, Ireland, and Thomas Long ; no specific charges were proved as to the secretary's firm having been favoured in the scale of rates, but these witnesses had a general impression that it was so, particularly in the charge for empty fish boxes (which are manufactured by the firm) from Tralee to Dingle.

On the part of the company it was contended that the partiality complained of could not be exercised as two of the directors were merchants in Tralee doing the same business as the secretary's firm, and it would be to their interest to prevent any manipulation of rates in the way suspected.

2. The complaint of the unpunctuality of the trains was spoken to by Father O'Sullivan, Messrs. O'Donoghue, Flaherty, Justin McCarthy, Herlihy, and Dissette.

This was attributed to bad fuel, want of water, unskilled drivers, and occasional breakdowns ; these causes of unpunctuality were for the most part allowed by the company.

3. The inconvenience of the hours at which the trains are run was complained of by Father O'Sullivan and Mr. Justin McCarthy. Up to last June the trains were run at more convenient hours, but since that month the hours have been as follows :—

Leave Tralee 10 a.m., arrive at Dingle 12.30 p.m.  
 Leave Tralee 6.30 p.m., arrive at Dingle 9 p.m.  
 Leave Dingle 7 a.m., arrive at Tralee 9.30 a.m.  
 Leave Dingle 3.30 p.m., arrive at Tralee 6 p.m.

Thus allowing too short a time (only three hours) in Dingle for persons leaving Tralee at 10 a.m., and too long a time (nine hours) in Tralee for persons leaving Dingle at 7 a.m., this latter being especially complained of as tending to drive people into the public-houses at Tralee while waiting for the train after doing their business.

The alteration in the running of the trains was stated to have been made for economical reasons, but that instead of effecting a saving, it had resulted, owing to a diminution in traffic, in a loss.

In reply to these statements the Company alleged that only one complaint on the subject had reached them, or otherwise they would have taken the matter into serious consideration.

4. The complaint as to the large working expenses and the consequent heavy charges on the ratepayers was supported by Father O'Sullivan, Messrs. O'Leary,

O'Donoghue, Slattery, and Herlihy. The rate to meet the excess of working expenses over receipts and the guaranteed interest, was stated to have amounted to 2s. 2d. in the pound for the year ending 30th November 1892, it having been originally expected not to exceed 3½d. in the pound.

In explanation of the working expenses it was stated on behalf of the Company that they included sums which ought to be charged to capital, but which in consequence of the Company having no surplus capital, had to be paid for out of revenue, amounting in the last half year to about 600l., or reducing the deficiency to about 700l. on the half year's working; that it was also hoped that an arrangement may be shortly come to with the Post Office for the carriage of the mails by which the deficit will be still further reduced. It was also urged that there was a saving in the cost of keeping the contract roads in repair in the barony of Corkaquin amounting to about 700l. a year since the opening of the railway, by which amount the rates should be relieved.

5. The abuse of free passes was complained of by Messrs. O'Donoghue and Slattery. The pass books showed that in some instances these had been issued without proper cause. The chairman stated that in future none were to be issued without a Board's order.

6. As to no facilities being afforded at the quay at Dingle for loading trawl fish into waggons, such fish having to be carted from the quay to the passenger station, Messrs. O'Donoghue, Thomas Long, Patrick Long, James Long, and Burke, gave evidence as to this, from which it appeared that 3d. a box had to be paid for sending trawl fish by cart from the quay to the railway station, whereas mackerel were loaded into trucks at the quay. The Company's reason for treating trawl fish differently from mackerel was stated to be that the latter arrived in truck loads at times more or less known, whereas trawl fish arrived at all times and in small quantities, and there would consequently be the need of a shed on the quay, and a man constantly on duty there to receive and weigh the fish.

7. The complaint as to the rate for trawl fish from Dingle to Dublin being too high, and not having been reduced since the opening of the railway was urged by Messrs. Thomas and James Long; previously to the line being opened it was stated to be 2s. a basket from Dingle to Tralee, and 3s. from Tralee to Dublin, the through fare being now from 5s. 6d. to 6s. a basket.

There was no reply from the Company to this complaint.

8. The complaint as to the coarse fish rates being prohibitory was spoken to by Messrs. Thomas Long, Patrick Long, and James Long.

The Chairman of the Company was of opinion that a lower rate would not develop the coarse fish traffic; the traffic manager stated the lowering of the rate had never been asked for, but that it might be tried.

9. Mr. Justin McCarthy complained of the want of special trains for fairs. In reply the traffic manager stated that these were always run for the Dingle pig fairs, and that they had been tried for cattle fairs, but had not being taken sufficient advantage of to warrant their being continued.

10. With regard to the rates for goods being now too high, it was stated by Mr. Herlihy that the rates had been raised on certain articles since the beginning of the year, giving as an instance that the rate for a cask of porter, which was formerly 9d., had been raised to 1s. 1d., the carriers' charge being 1s., the consequence was that three carriers were now on the road, there having been none after the railway was opened until recently. Father O'Sullivan also stated that in consequence of the high rate charged for goods many shopkeepers now used carriers instead of the railway. Mr. Dissette complained of the high rates for goods.

The Company acknowledged that some of the rates had been raised since the 1st January, when the new tariff came into force, but stated that they were not up to the maximum allowed.

11. The state of the fences was complained of by Father O'Sullivan as leading to the killing of cattle. In reply the engineer stated that the fences alluded to were principally those alongside of the tramway portion of the line; that these were now in a better state than when the line was opened; and that he was continually engaged in having them repaired.

12. The complaint as to notice not being given of the running of special trains was supported by Father O'Sullivan and Mr. O'Leary. The reason for desiring this

knowledge was that persons driving along the road might be able, if they wished it, to avoid meeting these trains when running on the tramway portion of the line. In reply it was stated that the running of special trains was advertised when possible; but that when a special train had to be run at short notice it was impracticable to do this.

With reference, then, to the last point raised in the memorial, viz., the general management of the line,—

1. It would in my opinion be desirable that the office of secretary should not be held by a member of a firm of merchants doing business in Tralee and Dingle, so that no ground, rightly or wrongly, may be afforded for the opinion that this firm is favoured in the matter of rates.

2. The trains are no doubt frequently unpunctual, attributable principally to the engines being unequal to hauling their loads up the heavy gradients and round the sharp curves with which the line abounds. As there are no means available for substituting more powerful engines for those now in use, no pains should be spared in maintaining these in the highest possible state of efficiency.

3. As the hours at which the trains are now run do not appear to give satisfaction, they might well be altered back to those which existed prior to last June.

4. The complaint as to heavy working expenses does not seem to me to be well founded. For the three half years ending November 30th, 1891, May 31st, 1892, and November 30th, 1892, they amounted to £3,486l., 3,542l., and 3,787l. respectively, the increase in the last amount being due to materials and labour for necessary accommodation, and an instalment of 230l. (more than that paid in the previous half year) for a new engine, the locomotive expenses having been in other respects diminished. This makes the working expenses per mile per week for the last half year about 3l. 17s., or 2s. 7½d. per train mile, not, I think, an extravagant amount considering the nature of the line and the fact of its having a branch, which necessarily tends to increase the cost of working. If from 3,787l. are deducted the sums paid for providing necessary accommodation and towards a new engine, which sums are properly chargeable to capital, and amount to about 600l., the working expenses per mile per week would have been only about 3l. 5s., or 2s. 2½d. per train mile, comparing favourably with the working expenses of some other similar lines. It is not so much, therefore, the fact that the working expenses are large which causes the heavy charges on the ratepayer, but rather the fact that the receipts are so small, amounting in the three last half years to 2,444l., 2,241l., and 2,479l. respectively, making for the last half year the amount only about 2l. 10s. 6d. per mile per week, or 1s. 9d. per train mile. It is satisfactory to observe that in the last half year there has been an increase of about 238l. in the receipts (of which 227l. are due to passengers), notwithstanding the complaints as to the inconvenience of the hours at which the trains are run and as to the heavy charges for goods. If, as the Company hopes, an arrangement may shortly be come to with the Post Office for running the mails, a considerable increase of receipts may be looked for, and though it will, I fear, be some time before the receipts will balance the expenditure, an important reduction in the sum to be provided by the baronies would no doubt take place; and in this connection it must also be borne in mind that from the heavy rate of 1s. 2d. in the pound required to meet the deficit in the last half year's working there should be deducted the considerable amount saved to the barony by the decreased expenditure in the maintenance of the roads.

5. Attention having been drawn to the improper use of free passes, the practice will no doubt in future be put a stop to.

6. It is most necessary that arrangements should be made for loading trawl and coarse fish into trucks at Dingle Quay (as is done in the case of mackerel), instead of their having to be sent from the quay to the railway station at a cost of 3d. per basket. In the case of a railway, one of the principal objects of which was to develop fish traffic, it is most important that no possible means should be omitted which can tend to foster that traffic.

7. There certainly seems room for a reduction in the rate for trawl fish from Dingle to Dublin.

8. It would also appear advisable to try and cultivate a traffic in coarse fish by lowering the existing rate.

\* Including an average for an additional month, this return extending only for five months.

9. Special fair trains seem to be run to as great an extent as the traffic warrants.

10. The complaints as to the rate for certain goods between Tralee and Anniscawl and other places being too high are borne out by the fact of carriers having again begun to ply, after having ceased to do so upon the opening of the railway until recently. This is a matter requiring the earnest attention of the Company, as being intimately connected with the prosperity of the line.

11. The subject of fencing is one that demands constant attention, and as regards those fences which are on the side of the road where the tramway runs, it appears to be the duty of the county surveyor, as well of the Company's engineer, to see that they are kept in proper order.

12. The Company seem to do as much as can be expected in giving notice of the running of special trains.

Having now considered the various subjects alluded to in the memorial, I would briefly recapitulate the conclusions arrived at, viz. :—

1. That as regards the constitution of the Directorate, the ordinary Directors might well be reduced in numbers, and if the order in council could be amended, an additional Director should be appointed for the Barony of Corkaquin, which guarantees half the capital of the railway.

2. That the salaries of the officials are not *per se* excessive, but that some economy might be effected by combining in one the offices of secretary and manager.

3. That as regards the management of the line, there are many matters deserving serious attention, viz., the fact of the secretary being the member of a firm doing business in Tralee, the maintenance of the engines in a thorough state of repair, the hours of running of the trains, the abuse of free passes, the affording of facilities at Dingle Quay for loading trawl and coarse fish, the lowering of the rates for trawl and coarse fish and certain descriptions of goods, and the careful maintenance of the fences.

I would further draw attention to the urgent necessity which exists for providing a small amount of working capital to meet the cost of an additional engine and of the accommodation works absolutely necessary for the proper development of the traffic. If this could be done it would reduce the cost of working expenses, which have now to bear charges properly payable out of capital.

The Assistant Secretary,  
Railway Department, Board of Trade.

I have, &c.,  
C. S. HUTCHINSON,  
Major-General, R.E.